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Charles the Bold, Last Duke of Burgundy, 1433-1477. "Heroes of the Nations." By RUTH PUTNAM. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Pp. 484.

According to the author's preface, the admission of Charles of Burgundy to the list of national heroes is justified by his connection with events rather than by his personal qualities, and it has been her task to write the life of a man placed in the foreground by circumstances rather than by character. The reader can hardly be expected to feel the deepest interest in such a hero, but the biographer has at least succeeded in presenting a vivid and scholarly narrative.

The great extent of territory over which Charles ruled, extending as it did in a broken line of rich duchies from Auvergne and Savoy on the south to the coast line of the Netherlands, gave him an influence in European politics that a wiser man might have used to greater effect. It was the dream of the last Burgundian duke to unite his possessions by conquering Lorraine and then to have himself crowned king of the united territories, thus forming a strong state between France and Germany. Foiled in this plan by the astute Louis XI of France, and humiliated by two defeats at the hands of the Swiss, he fell without glory at Nancy when only forty-one years old, and the marriage of his heiress Mary soon transferred the vast Burgundian estates to the control of the House of Austria.

The *Life of Charles the Bold* is in reality a study of political and social conditions in France and the Low Countries during the fifteenth century. It will well repay a reader who wishes to learn of the life of court, castle, and town in the days when feudalism as a political institution was disappearing before the rising spirit of nationality. The author's keen understanding of motive and character, and the gentle humor that underlies much of the story, give the book the justification which its central character fails to assure. Excerpts from contemporary writers give life to the narrative. Especially worthy of notice are the illustrations, thirty-two in number, consisting chiefly of portraits and groups taken from miniatures, all well chosen and admirably reproduced. A map and an index add to the value of the book.

DORA WELLS

CHICAGO NORMAL SCHOOL

American Playgrounds: Their Construction, Equipment, Maintenance, and Utility. By EVERETT B. MERO. Boston: American Gymnasia Co., 1908. Pp. 270. Illustrated.

American Playgrounds is a valuable collection of facts and opinions on the general subject of playgrounds. In Part I, it demonstrates the necessity of the playground as a requirement of our civilization. This is a necessary and at present a not too difficult task, as America has been awakened to the importance of play.

Instructions in the matter of placing playgrounds in the most available and useful location follow and in Part II the necessary equipment is stated upon well-recognized and conservative lines.

The rest of the book presents in somewhat abbreviated form the play pro-